

## **FAMILY TO FAMILY THE ROLE OF THE COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE AT TDM MEETINGS**

- The public child welfare agency makes a commitment to invite a Community Representative to all TDM meetings, and most especially to those involving the potential removal of a child from his/her birth family.
- The TDM Community Representative is a person invited by the public child welfare agency, through its continuing effort to forge new relationships with members of the communities from which children are often removed. These representatives are often identified through the joint efforts of the agency's Family to Family Community Partnership and TDM strategy work groups.
- The TDM Community Representatives agree to attend TDM meetings, especially those involving the possible removal of a child from his/her birth family, with the permission of the parents.
- The public agency provides an orientation to TDM, along with basic training on the role and responsibilities of the child welfare system, to all TDM Community Representatives prior to their first meeting. (Hopefully, the community has also provided basic training to public agency staff on its role in supporting those families it serves.)
- The TDM Community Representative attends the meeting in addition to those persons who may be present because the family asked them to participate; s/he is a person the public child welfare agency invites to ensure that every family has a natural ally at the TDM table.
- The TDM Community Representative may assume one or more of the following roles at the meeting:
  - To serve as a natural ally, and potential advocate, for birth parents at a TDM;
  - To represent the birth family's "community," whether because of a shared home neighborhood, or a shared community of faith, ethnicity or other natural connection; this supportive connection can continue throughout the family's involvement with the system and beyond;
  - To share an awareness of resources which might support the family, especially those available within the family's home community;
  - To make the birth family feel more comfortable in whatever way they can;
  - To help the agency's staff and its partners better understand the family's community of origin, especially its strengths;
  - To assist the family in understanding the agency's concerns in relation to safety and risk;
  - To fully participate in the meeting, and particularly to share ideas for ensuring the child(ren)'s safety while supporting the family.

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